

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING AND NEIGHBOURHOODS O&S COMMITTEE –

PUBLIC MEETING

1300 hours on Thursday 21 November 2019, Committee Room 2

Present:

Councillor Mahmood Hussain (Deputy Chair)
Councillors Marje Bridle and Mary Locke

Also Present:

Councillor Sharon Thompson, Cabinet Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods
Cheryl Bates, Operations Manager, Coroners and Legal Proceedings
Chris Jordan, Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods
Paul Lankester, Interim Assistant Director, Regulation and Enforcement
Jayne Bowles, Scrutiny Officer
Emma Williamson, Head of Scrutiny Services

1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

The Chairman advised that this meeting would be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site (www.civico.net/birmingham) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there were confidential or exempt items.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Deirdre Alden, Roger Harmer, Penny Holbrook and Shabrana Hussain.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

4. ACTION NOTES AND ACTION TRACKER

(See documents 1 and 2)

RESOLVED:

- The action notes of the meeting held on 24 October 2019 were agreed;
- The action tracker was noted.

5. UPDATE ON BEREAVEMENT SERVICES

(See document 3)

The Committee agreed for the agenda to be varied and for this item to be brought forward.

Councillor Sharon Thompson, Cabinet Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods, Paul Lankester, Interim Assistant Director, Regulation and Enforcement, and Cheryl Bates, Operations Manager, Coroners and Legal Proceedings, attended for this item.

In discussion, and in response to Members' questions, the following were among the main points raised:

- The Deputy Chair complimented the Cabinet Member and officers on the progress that had been made in respect of the provision of digital autopsies;
- In response to a question about sharing facilities across the Combined Authority area, Members were told that before proceeding with the proposal to look at a Centre of Excellence for mortuary and pathology services, the Leader had taken a paper to the West Midlands Met Leaders;
- The Leaders agreed unanimously to proceed, with the exception of Coventry, who are in a different coronial area;
- If the feasibility study suggests there is mileage in pursuing this, then options will be looked at;
- If it does not show there is a possibility of providing a shared service at better value for citizens, then the council will look at buildings where the mortuary could be re-housed, outside of the clean air zone and with better parking facilities;
- The Cabinet Member stressed that this is a trial at the moment and once the trial is finished an assessment will be done, not just looking at the cost but at efficiency and timeliness of scans as well;
- Thanks were expressed to all staff across Bereavement Services with regard to the significant steps which have been made, not just with the scanner but across the whole service.

RESOLVED:

- The report was noted.

6. LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOODS

(See documents 4 and 5)

Councillor Sharon Thompson, Cabinet Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods, and Chris Jordan, Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods, attended for this item.

The Deputy Chair confirmed that a paper on Relationship Managers had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting.

Chris Jordan apologised for the late report, but explained that this was because the survey had only recently closed. He then went on to highlight the key points and feedback included in the paper.

In discussion, and in response to Members' questions, the following were among the main points raised:

- The Cabinet Member expressed her thanks to the former Assistant Leaders for work previously done and to elected members who had contributed to the survey;
- Relationship Managers are a tool for local members within wards and the key thing is that the relationship is two-way;
- It has been difficult to get Relationship Managers up and running due to the boundary changes;
- Contact lists are reviewed but it is important for councillors to pass on information to enable them to be kept up-to-date;
- It is important to make the distinction between local operational issues and policy, as some things will not be in the gift of the Relationship Managers, however they can flag issues for further discussion at the appropriate level;
- In response to a question about the review of the Community Infrastructure Levy and the need to look at how the 85% for strategic investment is used, Members were told that there have been a series of meetings with a cross-party group, officers and portfolio holders and that will continue;
- A request was made for further information on this to be brought back to committee once the review is completed;
- Members suggested that there was a need to have a localisation led property strategy to look at how buildings could serve the needs of local communities;
- This is something that is being looked at with Property Services and it would be useful for this committee to look at how communication with elected members and communities could be improved;
- It was agreed that a further report would be brought back to committee, with the timing to be agreed, and the Cabinet Member requested that members be specific about what they want to see covered in that report.

RESOLVED:

- A further report to be programmed – timing and content to be agreed;

- The report was noted.

7. WORK PROGRAMME

(See document 6)

The work programme was discussed and the following agreed:

- December meeting – PRS Update; Update on PSPOs to be confirmed; Budget Consultation to be taken off the agenda as there are no new savings proposals for the Neighbourhoods Directorate.

RESOLVED:

The work programme was noted.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was noted.

9. REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS RECEIVED (IF ANY)

None.

10. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None.

11. AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS

RESOLVED:

That in an urgent situation between meetings the Chair, jointly with the relevant Chief Officer, has authority to act on behalf of the Committee.

The meeting ended at 1410 hours.